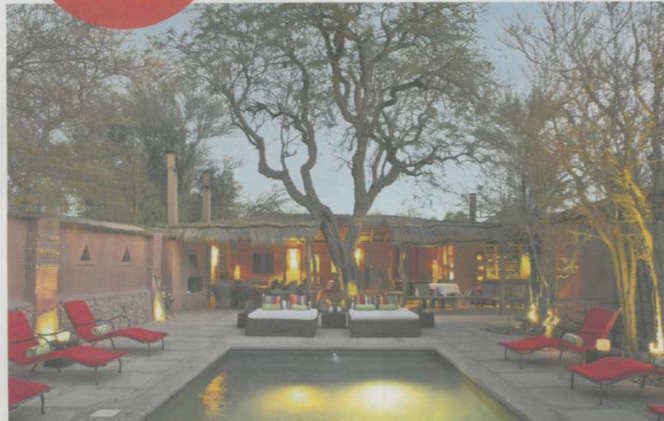




**The Big Six**  
By  
Aoife O'Riordain

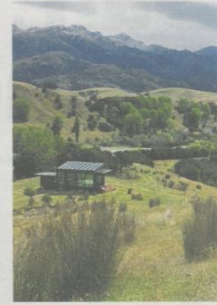
## Star-gazing retreats



### Awasi Atacama Chile

The unpolluted, high altitude and dry, clear skies of Chile's Atacama Desert combine to form the ideal climate for observing the cosmos. This 1,000km plateau sits at an altitude of about 2,400m, sandwiched between the Pacific Ocean and the mighty Andes mountain range. There are just eight adobe, stone and wood guest lodges at Awasi, just outside the town of San Pedro de Atacama in the high Altiplano. Guests can explore the other-worldly desert landscape by day and at night, guides come equipped with telescopes for star-gazing tours to explain the canopy that emerges when the sun goes down.

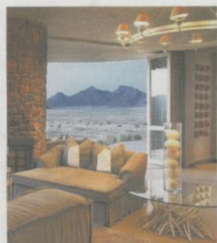
► *Tiscopilla 4, San Pedro de Atacama, Chile (00 56 222 339 641; awasiatacama.com). Rates start at US\$2,480pp (£1,771) for a three-night programme, all-inclusive.*



### Pure Pods New Zealand

You only get the exact location of New Zealand's Pure Pods when you book. The latest, Pure Pod Manakau, which opened this week, is set down an unmarked trail in the unspoiled wilderness in Kalkoura, South Island. Each pod is a futuristic-looking glass box with no curtains or blinds, offering great views of the Southern Cross. This is splendid isolation, with no television or wi-fi, and offers a chance to reconnect with nature, walking the trails for views of the surrounding Seaward Kalkoura Mountain Range.

► *Manakau, Kalkoura, South Island, New Zealand (purepods.com). Doubles from NZ\$490 (£225) per night.*



### &Beyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge Namibia

Would-be astronomers can check in to &Beyond's remote Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, set in the Namib Rand Nature Reserve, which was designated Africa's first International Dark-Sky Reserve two years ago. The lodge has its own observatory with a Meade L200R 12-inch telescope and the hotel's resident astronomers are on hand for guided after-dinner walks to point out galaxies and constellations to guests. Each of the 10 stone-and-glass suites has a large skylight to continue the show after bedtime.

► *NamibRand National Park, Namibia (00 27 11 809 4300; andbeyond.com). Doubles from N\$11,030 (£470), all-inclusive.*



### Kaksilauttanen Arctic Resort Finland

The ethereal glow of the Northern Lights can regularly be seen at this resort; actually two small villages deep in Finnish Lapland, just 250km from the Arctic Circle. You can even view the aurora borealis from your own bed in one of the 16 new Kelo-Glass igloos that opened late last year. These glass domes-cum-log cabins sleep up to six and have their own saunas, and are built from a fusion of local Kelo pine and glass for optimal viewing. The resort offers the full winter experience, with reindeer and husky safaris.

► *Kilopuutie 9, Saariselkä, Finland (00 358 400 270 057; kaksilauttanen.fi). Doubles start at €486, with breakfast.*



### Montage Deer Valley United States

Park City might be the setting for the annual Sundance Film Festival, but you can see more than just movie stars in this elevated part of Utah. The Montage Deer Valley's team of "constellation concierges" takes guests out for informative nightly tours with the hotel's Celestron Skyscout instruments. The ski-in, ski-out super-lodge sits at the foot of the Wasatch Mountain Range and has access to the extensive slopes around Park City and Deer Valley.

► *9100 Marsac Avenue, Park City, Utah, US (001 435 604 1300; montagehotels.com). Doubles start at \$300 (£214), room only.*



### Finn Lough Lodge Ireland

The heavenly bodies studding the ink-black, unpolluted skies of County Fermanagh can be seen from one of Ireland's quirkiest new hotel rooms. Opened last year, the two bubble pods on the grounds of Finn Lough Lodge, set in the forest by Lough Erne, provide 360-degree views and feature four-poster beds and a telescope. The domes are open all year, but January to March present the clearest views of the Milky Way.

► *41 Letter Road, Aghmashaney, Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, Northern Ireland (028 68 380 360; finnlough.com). Doubles from £175, including breakfast.*